

Goggles & Dust: Images from Cycling's Glory Days

Shelly Horton

Brett Horton

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As Europe emerged from the ashes of World War I, cycling, especially stage racing through the countryside and over snowy mountain peaks, united communities and nations. For a continent ravaged by two catastrophic wars, bicycle races like the Tour de France became symbols of strength, courage, and hope, and its heroes became legends in their time.

The races of the early to mid-20th century were far more dangerous, dusty, and difficult than they are today. Then, the popular Tour de France took racers over 5,745 kilometers, or 3,570 miles, with a mere seventeen stages; today's race is about 3,400 kilometers, with twenty-one stages. "It is only when one studies the etched lines on the faces of the riders as they toil up a rutted, muddy mountain road that one appreciates the true difficulty of the era's contests," write Shelly and Brett Horton. "And as we linger over the images, we then notice the joy in the eyes of the fans, both young and old, who stand along those same roads to cheer and encourage their heroes."

Photographs of cycling's legendary champions have become increasingly rare, and the Horton Collection, now amounting to more than 350,000 original racing photographs and negatives, while initially begun to help authenticate their collection of vintage racing jerseys and accessories, has become a veritable treasure trove that documents the sport's glory days. This book, with over 100 expertly restored photographs, brings to life the rigors, triumphs, and soul of competitive cycling in a way that words alone never could.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Winter 2015)

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